

NIGERIA—A Window for Change

The June 1998 death of Nigerian head of state Sani Abacha unleashed unexpected and extraordinary opportunities for a transition to civilian rule and democracy. Retired General Olesgun Obasanjo won Nigeria's February 1999 presidential elections and takes office in May 1999, ending 15 years of military rule. Given its vast size and wealth in natural resources and human capital, a democratic Nigeria could be a force for stabilization and an engine of economic growth for much of the continent. The challenges are great, however, with long-standing religious and ethnic tensions, endemic corruption, a weak economy, and an unpredictable military being among the factors that make this transition extremely fragile.

Working in concert with other parts of USAID and the U.S. government, OTI has quickly developed a program designed to sustain the current momentum toward national reconciliation and a democratically elected government. Its primary objectives are (1) to prevent military obstruction of the transition to civilian rule; and (2) to support the Nigerian movement for structural economic and political reform. OTI has established a central office in the Lagos-based USAID mission and regional offices in Port Harcourt, Abuja and Kano.

OTI's initial activities are targeted in the following areas:

- *Training for Good Governance:* OTI is joining forces with the USAID mission to train election winners and losers in areas including constituency building, transparency, structural reform and local capacity building.
- *Delta Pilot Projects:* OTI is working in the conflict-prone and strategic Delta region and other potentially volatile areas to facilitate partnerships among local communities, the private sector and local governments. OTI will provide seed capital for a development fund with a tripartite management from civil society, oil companies and local government representatives for targeted microenterprises and public services.
- *Coalitions for Reform:* OTI is working to mobilize national consensus on key issues, and develop key constituencies in favor of economic and political reform.
- *Civil-Military Affairs:* OTI is working with the State Department, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the NSC to facilitate early engagement with the government and civil society on issues of civil-military reform.

OTI's partners in Nigeria also include the USAID mission, U.S. Embassy, U.S. Information Service, and implementing contractor Louis Berger International. It expects to be working extensively with national and local government representatives, civil society, and the private sector.

New Country Program

OTI Assistance FY1998.....\$39,000

OTI Estimated Assistance FY1999.....\$5-7,000,000

For more information on OTI's program in Nigeria, contact Sylvia Fletcher, 202-712-5755, sfletcher@usaid.gov; or Rob Jenkins, 202-712-0914, rjenkins@usaid.gov.



PHILIPPINES—Tangible Benefits of Peace

In the fall of 1996 the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) signed a groundbreaking peace agreement with the government of the Philippines. For years, the rebels had protested the political, economic, and social marginalization of Filipino Muslims by waging guerilla war. The peace agreement contained provisions for Muslim political autonomy, but also placed great emphasis on economic development for the Muslims in Mindanao. By the summer of 1997, the government's failure to deliver on the promise of peace fueled restlessness on the part of former fighters.

OTI's objective is to bring tangible benefits to potential spoilers. Its programs reintegrate ex-combatants through the Emergency Livelihood Assistance Program (ELAP)—part of USAID's Growth with Equity in Mindanao (GEM) project.

Operating in 11 MNLF state areas, with up to 380 participants per area, the program gives ex-fighters agricultural production inputs, training, and technical assistance. They are then asked to repay the value of the production inputs into a local community fund, which is used to mobilize savings and leverage bank services for future loans. OTI has also provided training to representatives of the Bangsamoro Women's Foundation for Peace and Development on enhancing community participation, to assist them in developing the community funds.



MNLF ex-fighter plows a cornfield as part of an OTI-funded reintegration project in Mindanao. (Photo Source: Paul Randolph)

Oversight for OTI's program is provided by a management committee that includes representatives from USAID, the National Economic Development Authority, the Bangsamoro

Women's Foundation (ELAP's local NGO partner) and is chaired by the Southern Philippines Council for Peace and Development. At the local level, ELAP is guided by community committees composed of the MNLF state chairman and representatives from the Bangsamoro Women's Foundation and the MNLF National Unit Command.

In April 1999, OTI launched a second program, the Transition Assistance Grants (TAG) Initiative, to promote cooperation between the MNLF, the government, and Christians, and empower citizens and civil society organizations in the poorest areas of Mindanao. TAGs aim to improve socioeconomic conditions by linking village-based infrastructure and agriculture projects to the broader development objectives of the Philippines government and other donors. The projects are designed to prevent MNLF groups from reverting to armed conflict with the government by creating new opportunities for collaboration and enhancing indigenous leadership capability.

Testing Peace in Mindanao: Though the MNLF has signed a peace agreement with the government, more extreme Muslim organizations continue to seek independence from the Philippines. One such group, the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), rejected the 1996 peace process. Though MILF is currently in dialogue with the government, negotiations could be jeopardized if the economic development provisions of government's agreement with MNLF are not met. In addition, if MNLF supporters lose faith in the government's willingness and ability to redress their grievances, they could again resort to violence. OTI programs have bolstered the peace by giving the government breathing space to launch development programs.

Operational support for the TAG initiative is provided by Development Alternatives, Inc., a SWIFT contractor. OTI also coordinates with other donors funding programs in Mindanao, including Great Britain, Canada, Australia, UNDP, and the World Bank.

OTI Assistance FY 1997.....	\$867,000
OTI Assistance FY 1998.....	\$1,566,000
Total OTI Assistance to Date (FY97-98).....	\$2,433,000

For more information on OTI's Philippines project, contact Jim Lehman, 202-712-0113, jlehman@usaid.gov; or Chris O'Donnell, 202-712-0174, codonnell@usaid.gov.

RWANDA—Moving Past Genocide

The world watched in shock in 1994 as over half a million people at all levels of Rwandan society were killed in a matter of weeks. Where safety and trust were scarce, OTI began building basic security and community partnerships by supporting human rights monitors, the International Criminal Tribunal and by working with women's groups to rebuild community infrastructure and improve local governance capacities.

Those initial efforts expanded to include technical support to the Ministry of Justice for the drafting of a genocide law, radio broadcast coverage of the proceedings of the Tribunal, and assistance to the Ministry of the Interior to increase citizen participation in decision-making processes.

The Women in Transition (WIT) project has become a model for participatory programs focused on women. OTI has provided 1,600 grants to 1,450 women's associations in 85 communes and 11 of the 12 prefectures in Rwanda. WIT grants are used for shelter, livestock, income generation, and other activities identified by association members, improving the lives of over 163,000 beneficiaries.

With USAID's Rwanda mission, OTI also assisted in the elections process for local citizens' development councils and facilitated dissemination of information on the War Crimes Tribunal. These efforts, though discreet, proved effective in helping to increase Rwandans' confidence in peace and democracy.



A women's association in Rwanda constructs a house for an association member, providing their own labor and using OTI funds to buy roofs, doors, and windows. These kinds of activities often break traditional taboos, which demonstrate to Rwandan communities that women can play a new role in reconstructing their country. (Photo Source: Heather McHugh, OTI)

OTI's partners in Rwanda include the USAID mission; the Department of State; USIA; the U.S. Department of Justice; the United Nations; Internews; the International Rescue Committee; Africare; the Rwandan ministries of Gender, Justice, and the Interior; the Rwandan Development Organization; Radio Rwanda; a number of local workers' associations; and hundreds of Rwandan women's associations.



Members of a women's association in Kigali-Rural demonstrate pot-making. OTI is funding income-generating activities like this to help women participate more fully in the Rwandan economy. (Photo Source: Heather McHugh, OTI)

Working with Local Partners: It is not always necessary to work with international NGOs/PVOs as implementing partners in a conflict-prone country. Local organizations and Rwanda's government, though new and inexperienced, can be viable partners for USAID. This approach allows local partners to have a stronger voice in setting project goals, establishes an open line of communication between USAID and local organizations, saves money, and builds capacity in local institutions.

OTI Assistance FY 1997.....	\$3,798,000
OTI Assistance FY 1998	\$1,223,000
Total OTI Assistance (FY95-98).....	\$8,991,000

For more information on OTI's project in Rwanda, contact Roger Conrad, 202-712-5261, rconrad@usaid.gov; or Heather McHugh, 202-712-1224, hmchugh@usaid.gov.

SIERRA LEONE—Fostering Hope

Sierra Leone suffered a vicious civil war for over eight years, but in 1996 its people created a moment of hope and new possibilities. Led by women's groups, they mobilized protest against decades of governmental mismanagement, corruption, and political instability. This movement culminated in 1996 with a massive voter turn-out for the first fair election since 1967. Even brutal atrocities committed by rebel forces failed to discourage or intimidate the populace.

Shortly after the elections, OTI began a program focused on promoting political and economic reform and reconciliation. Assistance to citizens' groups, at both the national and grassroots levels, laid the foundation for reconciliation of former combatants and also increased citizen participation in post-conflict governance.

In May 1997, before a formal demobilization process could begin, the tenuous peace was shattered by an army coup. The democratically elected government fled the country, the international community evacuated all personnel, and OTI's program was suspended.

In March 1998, President Ahmed Tejan Kabba was returned to power after nine months in exile. The coup leaders were defeated and driven out of the capital city of Freetown. OTI's flexible programming capabilities enabled it to re-engage in July 1998.

When assistance resumed, OTI objectives were: (1) to provide technical assistance to senior officials and key ministries in the government, focusing on civil-military relations and the development of post-conflict security systems and structures; and (2) support civil society's engagement with the government to promote reconciliation and promote debate and development of consensus on key national issues.

Despite joint efforts by government, ECOMOG, and community-organized civil defense forces, the rebels made dramatic advances in December 1998 and January 1999. Heavy fighting reached Freetown. OTI's technical assistance to the government was temporarily suspended, pending resumption of normal U.S. Embassy operations. However, support to civil society continues with an emphasis on



Kamajor Civil Defense Forces patrolling a road in Pujehun District. The fragile peace was broken by renewed insurgency, but OTI continues its civil society programs. (Photo Source: Sylvia Fletcher)

engaging the government to develop consensus on a program of dialogue with the rebels.

OTI's program partners in Sierra Leone have included Africare, CARE, and World Vision. World Vision works in concert with UNICEF, the government of Sierra Leone, George Mason University, and Management Systems International. Smaller grants were made to the International Crisis Group and Florida International University. Additionally, OTI collaborates with UNDP, UN/DHA, British DFID, the World Bank, the U.S. Embassy, and within USAID, the Office of Food for Peace and the Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance, the Africa Bureau, and the Global Bureau.

OTI funding FY 1997.....	\$2,774,000*
OTI funding FY 1998.....	\$114,000
Total OTI Assistance (FY96-98).....	\$2,966,000

** Close to \$2 million is being deobligated because renewed fighting prevented implementation of some planned activities.*

For more information on OTI's program in Sierra Leone, contact Sylvia Fletcher, 202-712-5755, sfletcher@usaid.gov; or Rob Jenkins, 202-712-0914, rjenkins@usaid.gov.

SRI LANKA—Breaking a Cycle of Conflict

For the past 15 years, the government of Sri Lanka has been fighting the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), an insurgent organization demanding a separate state for the country's Tamil minority. Over 50,000 people have died in the conflict, and hundreds of thousands have been internally displaced. In 1996, the government made important military gains, extending control over previously rebel-held territory in the Jaffna Peninsula. While affirming its interest in peace, the government requested donor assistance for urgently-needed resettlement and rehabilitation activities.

OTI cautiously responded in 1997 with plans for small pilot projects. Proposed projects included 1) the provision of technical assistance to the Human Rights Commission, 2) the funding of a pilot capitalization project to stimulate micro-enterprise, and 3) support to the Jaffna Technical College.



Tamil woman reports missing husband to Human Rights Commission officer in Vavuniya, Sri Lanka. (Photo Source: K. Lively)



OTI found that the narrow window of opportunity to help break the cycle of conflict in Sri Lanka closed quickly. Ongoing fighting impedes movement in and out of the Jaffna Peninsula, and human rights abuses by both parties to the conflict abound. In 1998, through intimidation and a campaign of killing, the LTTE undermined the work of local government bodies in Jaffna, whose members had been elected in free and fair elections. It assassinated the newly elected mayor of Jaffna in May and the succeeding mayor in September 1998.

OTI suspended its Sri Lanka program because of the poor security environment.

OTI Assistance FY97.....	\$220,000
OTI Assistance FY98.....	\$253,000
Total OTI Assistance to Date (1997 – 1998)....	\$473,000

For more information on OTI's activities in Sri Lanka, contact Jim Lehman at 202-712-0113, jlehman@usaid.gov.

FORMER YUGOSLAVIA—Supporting Change Agents

With the outbreak of conflict in the Former Yugoslavia in 1993 came mass executions, the use of rape as an instrument of war, torture, and ethnic cleansing. The United States played a leading role in brokering the Dayton Peace Accords signed in December 1995, and continues to support reconstruction, democracy, and self-governance in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

OTI has helped to stimulate change by aiding indigenous organizations, supporting non-governmental media and civil society groups in their efforts to: (1) reshape hard-line attitudes and perceptions; (2) promote democracy, human rights, and basic freedoms; and (3) disseminate more objective information.

Independent Media

OTI helps to expand the publication and distribution of newspapers, magazines, and pamphlets that provide objective, factual information. It also funds production of informative radio and television broadcasts, such as public service announcements, investigative reports, and documentaries.

Four-and-a-half million newspapers and magazines featuring unbiased reporting have reached readers throughout the Former Yugoslavia as a result of OTI funding. Since April 1996, OTI has supported the expansion, development, and survival of three independent newswire services and 31 independent newspapers and news magazines.

Additionally, OTI has backed 55 independent television and radio stations, and sponsored more than 100 locally produced documentaries and roundtable discussions on a wide variety of issues of concern in the Balkans: human rights, the return and reintegration of displaced persons and refugees, domestic violence, independent journalism, the Dayton Peace Accords, economic and political reform, and public elections.

Civic Society Organizations

OTI supports civil society organizations in their efforts to promote democratic practices by both challenging and informing the public. Examples of such activities include: (a) organizing public forums, debates, petition drives, and peaceful demonstrations, and (b) publishing and distributing pamphlets and other written materials. OTI field staff have also worked to ensure that these organizations receive appropriate strategic and management advice, as well as legal assistance when required. To date, OTI has awarded 500 direct grants to more than 150 civil society groups in the Former Yugoslavia. For the May 1998 parliamentary elections in Montenegro, OTI

developed a comprehensive package of assistance to NGOs supporting a reform agenda in the election. These NGOs actively contributed to the electoral debates and had a direct impact on the success of Montenegrin President Djukanovic's governing coalition. Since their victory, the Djukanovic government has aggressively pursued democratic reforms despite increasing pressure from the Yugoslav federal authorities. In the wake of the NATO action in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, the continuing neutral stance of the Montenegrin government is truly heroic.

Community Improvement Efforts

Rebuilding local infrastructure is a critical need in many communities, and OTI has funded a number of local improvement projects. OTI helped to provide electricity in the Brcko region for Serbs, Croats, and Muslims. Additionally, the lessons learned from two 1995 OTI pilot projects on emergency shelter helped launch a much larger \$25 million USAID emergency shelter program in 1996.

Partners

OTI has partnered with over 250 local NGO/PVOs, advocacy groups, and media providers. OTI's procurement agent, RONCO, has contributed significantly to the program's smooth operation. Since early 1996, OTI has supported several international groups, including World Learning, Search for Common Ground, and World Vision.

Note: *As this report goes to press, the NATO bombing of Serbia and Kosovo has caused OTI to close its offices in Serbia and the Bosnian entity of Republika Srpska.*

OTI Assistance FY 1997.....	\$11,983,000
OTI Assistance FY 1998.....	\$10,917,000
Total OTI Assistance to date (FY95-98) ..	\$28,381,000

For more information on OTI's activities in the Former Yugoslavia, contact David Costello, 202-712-5231, dcostello@usaid.gov.

KOSOVO—Post-Conflict Rapid Response

In March 1999, NATO forces initiated a bombing campaign in Serbia and Kosovo in an effort to draw Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic back to the negotiating table with the Kosovar Albanians. Milosevic's Serbian government has refused to sign a peace agreement that would end its brutal cleansing of ethnic Albanians in Kosovo and restore Kosovo's autonomy, which was revoked by the Milosevic government in 1989. The outcome of the bombing campaign is not known as this report goes to press.

OTI's previous transition assistance experience—especially its three years of work in Serbia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Croatia—along with its fast and flexible programming approaches, make it uniquely suited to engage in the Yugoslav province of Kosovo should ongoing military operations give way to civilian-led reconstruction efforts.

In response to a (now failed) October 1998 U.S.-brokered peace accord, OTI immediately opened a field office in Pristina, identified three additional field offices, and hired staff. In concert with USAID's regional and global bureaus, it defined a series of potential reconstruction efforts that could engage Kosovo citizens in rebuilding their communities and provide momentum for a move toward peace. Building on its existing Balkans program, it undertook a series of media-related activities that gave voice to moderates seeking non-violent solutions in Kosovo. (The Pristina office was closed and activities were suspended with the advent of NATO bombings.)

OTI's October 1998 Kosovo strategy may still be relevant if post-bombing opportunities for civilian reconstruction efforts emerge. Built on a foundation of democratic and participatory processes, it focused on: (1) refurbishing and repairing homes, schools, community centers, and clinics; (2) restoring and improving public services; (3) strengthening moderate voices and leadership; (4) empowering ordinary citizens; and (5) fostering participatory decision-making at the local level.

OTI retains staff in the region, continues to monitor the situation closely, and is initiating small-scale activities in Macedonia and Albania to support the refugees and their host communities.

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE FOR TRANSITIONS

Increasingly, OTI is called upon to provide technical assistance to USAID missions, U.S. embassies, other U.S. government agencies, and multilateral and bilateral aid organizations. OTI's experience and creative approach to promoting peace and democracy in conflict-prone countries enable it to provide useful insights in transition contexts. Moreover, this technical assistance can leverage non-OTI resources to implement transition activities in situations not ripe for a complete OTI country program.

To date, OTI's technical assistance experience has focused on: (1) providing information, program options, and lessons learned to U.S. negotiation teams; (2) organizing and funding public and private fora for community, business, and public sector leaders to come together to discuss issues related to advancing peace and democracy; (3) conducting field assessments to provide recommendations on potential peace-and confidence-building activities; and (4) participating on other assessment teams to examine potential transition activities that might be linked to disaster assistance.

OTI has provided technical assistance in the following countries:

- **Lebanon** (March 1999)
- **Peru/Ecuador** (February 1999)
- **Honduras** (December 1998)
- **Georgia** (October 1998)
- **Papua New Guinea** (September 1998)
- **Nigeria** (August - September 1998)
- **Sudan** (April - May 1998)
- **Kenya** (April - May 1998)
- **West Bank/Gaza** (February 1998)
- **Northern Ireland** (November 1997, April 1998)
- **Tajikistan** (1997)
- **Philippines** (1997)
- **Guatemala** (November 1996)
- **Angola** (April 1994)